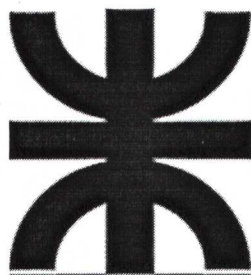


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Universidad Tecnológica Nacional
Facultad Regional Concepción del Uruguay
Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa

Proyecto:

“Female stereotypes in the novel *The Agüero Sisters* by Cristina García”

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"Female stereotypes in the novel *The Agüero Sisters* by Cristina García"

Mariana Martinez

1. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my family for their constant support: Estela, Carlos, Diego, Martina, Ina.

To Patricia for her time, for guiding me and helping me grow.

Thank you all!

2. ABSTRACT

The aim of this work is to explore the construction of Latino women stereotypes through the choice of vocabulary in the novel *The Agüero Sisters* by Cristina García. Lexical choices were selected and analyzed on the basis of Cultural Studies and Critical Linguistics. Our results mainly revealed the objectification and animalization of women with idealized bodies and relaxed attitudes towards their sexual life, which make men fall under their powerful spell.

3. INTRODUCTION

Just like any woman...

we weave our stories

out of our bodies

(Francesca Lia Block – Huffpost Women)

Stereotyping, central theme of this work, is referred to as a vivid but simple representation that reduces people to a set of exaggerated, usually negative, character traits. A stereotype suggests that a given category has inherent and universal characteristics and "these characteristics represent all that such person is or can be" (Barker, 2004: 188). Along similar lines, Eagley (1987) considers stereotypes as generalized beliefs about the characteristics and qualities attributed to people in society.

Goatly (2000) suggests that a stereotype is a by-product of the categorizing system which underlies vocabulary because language is closely related to the way we think and how we behave and affect others (Kramsch, 1998). There are different ways of saying the same thing and the choice is not done accidentally: different word choices carry "ideological distinctions" (Fowler 1991: 4). This is why we can say that language is shaped by our ideological processes and it has a strong effect as a tool through which we construct our reality and identity. This construction is selective as we have to decide which aspects of reality to include or how to organize them so as to reflect our own ideological value system (Barker, 2001). In other words, the 'language-ideology nexus' plays an important role in the choice of vocabulary that encodes value and ideology, conveys value more or less obviously or may be used for strategic purposes (Zaidi 1997, Goatly 2000).

Women, sometimes represented in an unfavourable way due to historical prejudiced views of their role in society, belong to a category which "shares peculiar characteristics" (Fowler, 1991: 95) suitable for analysis.

There are different studies carried out about the role of women in general and Latino women in particular. Among these studies, there are those stereotyping women in the advertisement industry (Acevedo et al, 2010; Acevedo et al, 2006; Kang, 1997), in the US popular culture industry (Molina Guzmán et al, 2004; Angharad, 2004), in children's books (Meganck, 2010), in sports journalism (Ponterotto, 2014). These studies analyze the stereotypical women in the fashion industry, emphasize sex-role stereotypes in stories for children, focus on Latinas icons in the figures of Salma Hayek or Jennifer Lopez emphasizing their bodies and sexuality, analyze female athleticism in the press in which bodies are trivialized. These studies tend to stereotype the urban woman mainly.

On the other hand, there are studies which focus on the Latino woman in literature, such as Dominguez Miguela; 2001, Barros Grela, 2010; Ochoa Fernández, 2005. On these studies the focus is on myths and archetypes of the Latino woman in literature, on their identity, on different generations of Latino women in the same family, on their role in the family and society. However, there is a lack of studies in relation to the Latino woman stereotype in relation to her body and sexuality in literature written by writers of Latin American origin.

In order to analyze in literature socially-constructed female stereotypes of Cuban Latino women living in the USA, as represented through the eyes of the Cuban-born feminist writer, Cristina García, we have chosen her novel *The Agüero Sisters*. We have chosen this novel because Cristina Garcia focuses on women in her novel as history has been written by and about men. Although the Latino society has been established as a male domineering system (Shejbalová, 2011), Cuban American families have substituted this pattern to a more egalitarian system. This way, Cristina García introduces her representation of Latino America women as a woman who has moved from the passive, subordinate and oppressed woman to a more educated and rebellious being (Shejbalová, 2011). By analyzing female stereotypes in the novel *The*

Agüero Sisters, we aim to find what socio-cultural representation of Latino women defines the characters in the novel.

4. STUDIES ABOUT LATINO WOMEN

García Canclini (1990 in Calafell & Delgado, 2004: 9) names Latinos as "cultural hybrids making culture within and out of a transcultural space that connects north and south." Cultural identity of diaspora people is a question of "becoming as well as being" (Romero Ruiz, 2012), which means that their identities are not fixed but they are enhanced by their experience and this is why it is important to analyze cultures within their context. The transcultural realities of Latinos in the US are in a constant process of (de)construction through the blending of their experience.

In literature we may find female archetypes that are attributed to the idea or image of women in a certain culture. These archetypes or myths may have contributed to negative consequences for women as regards their stereotypes, which may result in the manipulation of ideas. Perpetuation of such archetypes or myths does not necessarily give the image of a real woman.

Dominguez Miguela (2001) considers that the Anglo-Saxon society has both created different stereotypes of Latino women and also exaggerated others that had already existed in the culture of origin of these women. This implies a manipulation of the image of Latinas, which reflects the need of the dominant culture to keep their dominance over minorities in the social situation where they should be, thus, emphasizing the difference.

A Latina is a woman defined as a citizen of the US and whose family comes from Mexico, Central America or South America, i.e. they come from a variety of territorial origins. This work focuses on how the Latino female characters represent conventional stereotypes of social constructs that occur through contrasts of two different cultural and socioeconomic worlds, the Latin American world and the American world.

Dominguez Miguela (2001) classifies the Latino woman stereotypes as follows:

- Latino woman as maid to a wealthy America family
- Latino woman as the innocent, angelic, catholic woman who reminds of "Virgin Maria"
- Latino woman as the ardent woman capable of provoking strong passions

Similarly, Ochoa Fernández (2005) links the roles of Latino women to those as mothers, wives and daughters (maternity, marriage, domesticity).

Following Fredickson& Roberts' (1997, in Morris 2013: 6) perspective, we agree that we live immersed in a culture where "women's bodies are looked at, evaluated and objectified". Objectification occurs when a woman's body or a part of her body is isolated from the person and is considered mainly as a physical object of men's lust. (Symanski et al, 2011:7) Being sexually (self-) objectified and treated as an object to be valued is a regular occurrence for many women.

5. THE AGÜERO SISTERS

5.1 THE AUTHOR

Cristina García, considered one of the most important Cuban-American voices in the American literature, was born in Havana on July 4th 1958. When Fidel Castro came into power, she moved to New York with her parents where she grew up. She completed a Bachelor's degree in Political Science at Barnard College in 1979 and in 1981 graduated with a Master's degree in International Relations from Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. She worked at The New York Times, at The Boston Globe, at Knoxville Journal and finally she accepted a job at Time Magazine in New York before finally turning to writing fiction full-time. Her first novel, *Dreaming in Cuban* published in 1992, was nominated for a National Book Award and has been widely translated. She then wrote *The Agüero Sisters* in 1997, *Monkey Hunting* in 2003, a collection of poetry: *The Lesser Tragedy of Death* in 2010, among others. Her latest novel *King of Cuba*, was published in 2013.

5.2 THE NOVEL

The Agüero Sisters tells the story of two half-sisters, Reina and Constanica who reunite in Miami after a long estrangement of thirty years. When these half-sisters meet again, tension starts between them. The novel describes both sisters' lives in the USA including flashbacks of their lives in Cuba.

5.3 THE FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL

There are five women characters in the novel. Two sisters, Constanica and Reina, and their daughters, Isabel and Dulce, respectively. The fifth women character is Constanica and Reina's mother, who is already dead when the novel starts.

At the beginning of the novel Reina and Dulce live in Havana, Cuba, until they decide to migrate. On the other hand, Constanica and Isabel have lived in the USA for many years.

Constancia has lived for thirty years in the USA and therefore, she is proper for the American society. She is a successful businesswoman and is only interested in external appearance. Her daughter, represented as an androgynous woman, is not a very prominent character in the novel.

Our corpus is mainly based on lexical items related to Reina, who, with her voluptuous Amazonian style, is the richest character for the analysis of Latino women stereotypes. Reina lives her life naturally as regards her body and in her relation to men, and this is why she allows herself to enjoy life and have a free sexual life using men as she pleases. American men find her irresistible. Her daughter also lives her sexual life without any taboo but, in her case, as a means to improve economically in her life.

6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

After reading a number of novels written in English by authors of Latino background which narrate stories of Latinos (Cubans, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, among others), living in the United States and expressing their traditions, conflicts and transformations, we became interested in discovering what stereotypical Latino woman is represented in such novels.

As regards our specific aims, we have decided to analyze the female stereotypes in *The Agüero Sisters* to discover:

- which female stereotypes are represented in the novel,
- which attributes and behaviours define these stereotypes, and
- what portrayal of women they socialize through literature.

The following research questions have been considered for the study:

- Do stereotypes show a positive or negative evaluation of Latino women?
- What female characteristics are emphasized by (over)lexicalization?
- Do women characters define a Cuban-American female stereotype?

7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Discourse –in speech or writing- is a form of social practice. It is through discourse and language that users constitute their social realities. Therefore, in order to explore meanings and representations generated by these social practices in the context in which they occur, the theoretical framework for this work comes from the perspectives given by studies in the field of Cultural Studies and Critical Linguistics.

7.1 CULTURAL STUDIES

Cultural Studies can be understood as a discursive formation: ways of talking about and behaving in relation to a group of ideas, images and practices about a particular topic, social activity or institutional site. In other words, Cultural Studies is formed by a certain way of speaking about objects which corresponds to key concepts, ideas and concerns that include articulation, culture, discourse, ideology, identity, popular culture, power, representation and text.

Barker (2002) considers Cultural Studies as a multidisciplinary field, not yet established as a unified academic discipline; that is why it is still identified with the examination of culture, power and politics. This author also suggests we should ask what the purpose of Cultural Studies is, rather than what Cultural Studies is, because this enables us to consider this discipline not as an object but as something that can be accurately represented (Barker, 2000).

Along similar lines, Grossberg (1997) understands Cultural Studies as the academic field which concentrates itself with particular aspects of everyday life phenomenon. Within the field of Cultural Studies, context represents everything, and at the same time, everything is contextual. It focuses on cultures and the individuals and their identity constructions, which the individual develops through social and cultural relationships.

Barker (2001, 2002) conveys that language is the key element for human beings to understand the world and construct culture. It is the "means and medium through which we form knowledge about ourselves and the social world" (Barker, 2002: 14). And as such, marked emphasis is given to language in cultural studies. The choice of words is important in providing cues for interpreting events. This choice may define how we perceive/interpret the actions/intentions of the participants.

Goatly (2000: 49), on his part, considers the effect of language on the way we think in two ways:

- "the vocabulary and grammar of a particular language predispose the speakers/writers of that language to think in certain ways about themselves, other members of society and the world around them" and,
- "the grammatical and vocabulary choices which a speaker/writer makes within the resources of that particular language construct a representation of the world, rather than simply reflect a pre-existing reality."

7.2 CRITICAL LINGUISTICS

Critical Linguistics explores relationships between language use and the social conditions of the use. It responds to the "problems of fixed, invisible ideology permeating language" (Fowler, 1991: 67). This means that the view the critical linguist has of the world implies social structures that manifest different ideologies and therefore they study the way language reflects these structures. According to Halliday's (1985, in Fowler 1991) view, language grammatical system is related to the social and personal needs that language serve; thus, any aspect of linguistic structure can carry ideological significance. The lexical items chosen construct our specific ideological representations.

It is an approach to the study of discourse that views language as a form of social practice. Therefore, a model for examining connections between linguistic structure and social values is, for Fowler (1991), the functional model developed by Halliday

(1985, in Fowler 1991) in which he proposes that language performs three functions simultaneously, called ideational, interpersonal and textual. We based the analysis of this work on the idea of the ideational function because it is through the ideational function of language that texts are able to refer to realities 'outside' of the speaker, enabling her/him to embody in language his experience of the phenomena of the real world. "It is through this function that the speaker or writer embodies in language his experience of the phenomena of the real world; and this includes his experience of the internal world of his own consciousness: his reactions, cognitions, and perceptions, and also his linguistic acts of speaking and understanding..." (Fowler, 1991: 69). The ideational function is responsible for the texts' representational characteristics.

Discursive practices may have major ideological effects as they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent and manifested in language (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). In this work we aim to discover the role of language as a means and medium through which the cultural representations of Latinas in the American society is portrayed.

7.3 ABOUT STEREOTYPES

Many definitions of stereotypes reflect the views and perspectives of different authors. Courtney & Whipple (1983: 205), for example, have defined it as "a shorthand which helps to convey ideas and images quickly and clearly". Turner (1999) considers stereotypes as social categorical judgments of people in terms of their group memberships. Similarly, for Ashmore and Del Boca (1981, in *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination*, 2009: 21), a stereotype is a "set of beliefs about the personal attributes of a social group". In the same handbook, Bodenhausen, Kramer, & Susser (1994); Bodenhausen, Sheppard, & Kramer (1994); Macrae, Milne, & Bodenhausen (1994) define stereotyping as a way of simplifying the demands on the perceiver.

In addition, "stereotyping occurs when, on the basis of some members of a class having a characteristic or belonging to another class, other members are assumed to have that characteristic or belong to that other class" (Goatly, 2000:55). Also, most people rely on the characteristics that society has developed for their group of belonging as oversimplified ideas that represent them. These socially developed representations reflect relations of power observable within a culture and may lead to negative (or not) judgments, involving prejudiced behaviours towards other social groups. In this sense, Goatly (2000) concludes that the representation on language is observable in two ways: through the choice of vocabulary and through the structures we use to establish relationships between the objects we refer to.

The construction of any representation of 'reality' is necessarily selective, entailing decisions as to which aspects of that reality to include and how to arrange them. As regards reality representation in the novel, the two geographical worlds (Cuba and the USA – Latin America and America) indicate two ways of observing and analyzing relationships between people and cultures.

7.4 TYPOLOGY

Fowler (1991: 92) suggests that we live in a world "culturally organized set of categories, rather than a collection of unique individuals"; otherwise paying attention to every detail individually would be overwhelming for us.

Language is itself shaped by our ideological processes and it has a strong effect on the way we perceive reality. Through language we construct our reality and identity. This construction is selective as we have to decide which aspects of reality to include or how to organize them so each selection made reflects our own ideological value system (Barker, 2001). In other words, the 'language-ideology nexus' plays an important role in the choice of vocabulary that encodes value and ideology, conveys value more or less obviously or may be used for strategic purposes (Zaidi 1997, Goatly 2000).

Stereotypes may be categorized according to almost any characteristic. Therefore, typology could include any category already pre-existing in our minds, such as: race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation. These categorizations may affect the individual as they might bring about unequal status, whether related to job opportunities, to education, to income, and the like. Similarly, Gooden & Gooden (2001) categorize female stereotypes taking into account traits such as physical appearance, physical abilities, attitudes, interests, or occupation.

8. RESEARCH

For the purpose of the present our study, we think after Fowler (1991) that a model to analyze relations between vocabulary choice and social values is Halliday's Functional Model. We specifically base our analysis on the idea of the Ideational Function of this model because it is through this function that may observe the representation and categorization of the user's experience or view of the world rather than a pre-existing reality. The ideational component implies a connection between structure and experience through which a view of the world is mediated, for example, through lexical categories.

Such lexical choices are taken by the user of the language in order to construe his experience of the real world, or, as Fairclough (1989) states, representations of the world are coded in his choice of vocabulary.

This study examines the samples of our corpus according to different lexical categories or classes: nouns and adjectives in order to discover the presence of stereotype traits of Latino women through the choice of vocabulary, which might reveal underlying ideologies in reference to Latino women in particular.

We understand that vocabulary or lexis, within Halliday's ideational model forms a representational map of objects, concepts, processes or relations perceived socially and culturally. We also take Goatly's (2000) words that vocabulary is used to classify the objects and phenomena or the world and this classification leads to stereotyping. In other words, as Goatly (2002) also states, stereotyping is a by-product of the categorizing systems of vocabulary. It occurs when members of the same group are assumed to have the same characteristics. In this case, lexicalization in the novel gives a representation of the Latino woman.

Therefore, in order to carry out our, we consider:

- 1- lexicalization: because nouns represent categories of things, adjectives represent relatively permanent qualities (Goatly 2000), which the author chooses to concentrate for the representation of the Latino women,
- 2- over-lexicalization: because the author may use repetition of the same vocabulary or use synonyms or quasi-synonyms, which may embody ideology or an ideological problem about what is being emphasized.

8.1 METHODOLOGY

As Fowler (1991) suggests, ideology permeates language, i.e. beliefs, values, points of view are encoded in the language we use through the different choices of words or phrases.

Therefore, besides classifying our samples into the different lexical categories, we grouped them in two domains a) physical aspects of Latino women (bodies for display, emphasizing characteristics of certain parts of the body) and b) the attitude of Latino women towards sex.

The samples were processed and analyzed qualitatively by observation and comparison to confirm or reject our hypothesis of an ideological pattern in the description of Latino women stereotypes.

8.2 LEXICALIZATION

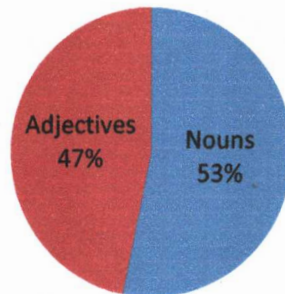
We have a corpus of 62 samples (33 nouns and 29 adjectives) which are used to portray Latino women in the novel. This woman is represented through words that focus on her permanent characteristics (i.e. the nouns) and those that describe her temporary characteristics (i.e. the adjectives).

| Nouns | Adjectives |
|---|---|
| skin, flesh, mouth, nails, hands, lips, hips, breasts, bosom, thighs, buttocks, muslos, legs, muscles, nalgas, nalgotas, behind, hair | hot, flammable, rampant, not complicated, passionate |
| mare, amazona, jinetera, Mata Hari, whore, specialties | exorbitant, titanic, generous, curvaceous, strengthened, mesmerizing, smooth, fluorescent, radiant, beveled, soft, large, flawless, lacquered, carnelian, manicured, pliant, pampered |
| on fire, in shape, form, image, attraction, temptation, goddess, beast, pandemonium | thick, springy, intimate, wild |
| | good-looking, beautiful |

Table 1: Lexical categories

These samples translate into the following percentages

Lexical Categories



Graph 1: percentage of lexical categories

where nouns categorize women in relation to sexual life and adjectives identify passionate and erotic characteristics.

To begin with the analysis, regardless of the lexical categories they belong to, for the present research we grouped these lexical items according to their semantic similarities.

| Body | Sex |
|---|---|
| skin, flesh, mouth, nails, hands, lips, hips, breasts, bosom, thighs, buttocks, muslos, legs, muscles, nalgas, nalgotas, behind, hair | mare, amazona, jinetera, Mata Hari, whore, specialties on fire, hot, temptation, flammable, rampant, not complicated, passionate exorbitant, titanic, generous, in shape, curvaceous, strengthened, form, image, attraction, mesmerizing, smooth, fluorescent, radiant, beveled, soft, large, flawless, lacquered, carnelian, manicured, pliant, pampered thick, springy, intimate, wild good-looking, beautiful, goddess, beast, pandemonium |

Table 2: domains out of semantic similarities

As already said in section **Studies About Women**, page 6 of this work, Dominguez Miguela (2001) considers that the maid of a wealthy American family, the ardent woman capable of provoking passion and the angelical catholic woman, conform the three Latino women stereotypes the Anglo-Saxon society has construed. The image of the Latino woman is then manipulated according to the needs of the domineering culture in which she is immersed in. The domains identified relate to the ardent woman with a highly sexualized body.

The words which mention parts of the body represent 29 % and those which relate to sex represent 71 %. Taking into consideration the two domains, it is clear that there is a greater difference in the number of words in each group.

As regards the body domain, only parts of the Latino woman body are mentioned. On the other hand, in relation to the sex domain, we have identified words that add characteristics to the Latino woman or to her body or words that make reference to the Latinas as prostitutes.

The body, the key site for identity construction, is the physical or material frame of the human being. Cultural Studies considers it as the result of historical processes which constantly problematize its existence and place in the social world where racial, gender and sexual identities, among others, may be considered cultural constructions which shape the body (Masuero, 2014).

The Latino woman is portrayed as a fragmented person who has a discontinued and dismembered body. Only some parts are mentioned and highlighted: *skin, flesh, mouth, nails, hands, lips, hips, breasts, bosom, thighs, buttocks, muslos, legs, muscles, nalgas, nalgotas, behind* and *hair*. (Some words are in Spanish, a characteristic of Latino literature.)

Bartky (1990 in Morris 2013) suggests that women undergo a process of fragmentation in which their entire being is identified with the body, a thing that is considered less human than the mind or personality. Thus, fragmentation of the Latino woman does not result into a complete person. The presence of her external body mainly, except the head, ears or arms or an internal structure to sustain her upright stance shows this. The only internal parts mentioned are the *muscles* and the *flesh*, only mentioned due to the firmness they give to the external body. Therefore, we may infer that no importance is given to what this woman thinks or feels.

Latinas are represented as body parts that arouse men's sexual desire; these parts are functional to men's pleasure for sexual intercourse. While her *skin* and *legs* represent sensuality, *breasts* and *buttocks* are symbolic of sexual attraction and beauty. The Latinas' *legs* are depicted as *strengthened* and *beveled*. Her *skin* is *smooth, fluorescent, radiant*. Her *breasts* are represented as *beautiful, soft* and *generous* in size. Her *buttocks* are exuberant in size, too. Molina Guzmán and Valdivia (2004) describe Latinas as spitfire females characterized by red-colored lips and curvaceous hips and breasts.

Women's bodies are looked at, evaluated and potentially objectified in our culture (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997 in Morris 2013). This objectification is observable in the representation of the Latino woman as a sexual commodity in which her body parts are singled out and separated from her as a person and thus, considered a physical object (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997 in Szymanski, 2011).

As Pagès (2013) suggests, Latin Americans have represented the image of women that reflects men's fantasies and become objects of desire. Their image has been eroticized and hypersexualized and they have been considered promiscuous, amoral and far from the model of the ideal woman.

We can find reminiscence to Greek mythology through the words *titanic*, *beast*, *goddess*, *pandemonium*.

The word *titanic* refers to the power of the Titans, the group of twelve gods, immediately preceding the Olympian gods in Greek mythology. A *beast* (person) is defined as a muscular person, an unattractive female, or a cheap prostitute; any woman whatever, but especially a young, attractive one (slang). One of the Latino women is depicted as a *titanic beast*, two mythological words that show her as an extraordinary powerful person.

A *goddess* refers to a pagan female divinity; a woman who is adored or idealized, especially by a man. Goddesses were much like humans but had awesome powers, whose plots usually entangled people. They represent mystery or power. Through the magnetism her body causes, the Latino woman seems a powerful tool for attracting men.

Pandemonium, defined as wild and noisy disorder or confusion, may be compared to the chaos produced when the Latino woman appears in places in the presence of men.

Her outstanding image represents the spark for carnal passion, which relates to the domain sex.

Although the Latino woman is objectified and her body is trivialized and presented as an object for consumption, she also appears as a powerful woman who provokes chaos and admiration but seems to be in control of the situation.

Borja Dousdebés (2012) suggests that colours transmit ideas and feelings and make us react in a certain way in their presence; we may feel cold, heat, love, etc. Colour red is used in connection to the Latino woman. This is a very intense colour with high visibility which stimulates physical senses. It is an extremely provocative colour, and has many conflicting meanings (Dilloway, 2006). It may symbolize blood, fire, love, passion, seduction, sin, sensuality and sexuality. In religious traditions, a red apple appears as a forbidden fruit representing sin. Red is also the colour of some precious stones.

There are different instances in which this colour is used to portray the Latino woman. *Carnelian*, a red variety of quartz –a fetish object, is the colour the Latina uses for her lips. Red is also in her *flesh* and *muscles*. And red is also present when she is represented as a person who is *on fire*. Red is a vibrant colour which may mean a magnet for men. This colour relates passion to temptation, if we consider the apple as the materialization of desire. Again, we are in the presence of a powerful woman.

The animalization of the Latino woman portrays a woman who moves between the rational and the instinctive behavior, as Lopez Rodriguez (2009) suggests. The following words categorize women as an animal, "dehumanizing" (Morris, 2013: iv) her. In this case she is compared to a horse: *jinetera*, *amazona*, and *mare*. The words in Spanish, *jinetera* and *amazona*, may be considered sexually abusive terms. The literal meaning of both words is a horsewoman. But, *jinetera* also means prostitute in Cuba and *amazona*, means a woman who rides horses though in this case, the

reference is to a woman who "rides men". A *mare* is an adult female horse. The Spanish translation for *mare* is *yegua*, which also means a female horse but, it is also used informally to refer to a woman who is highly attractive.

These two words, *jinetera* and *amazona*, of the domain sex, imply a woman who is on top, above and exercising control over men. This can be contrasted to the presumed malleable woman who does not have the internal structure needed to sustain her body.

The word *rampant*, used in connection to the Latino woman's sexual life, may also make reference to an animal, if we consider it may be used to refer to an animal standing on the hind legs or with the body upraised.

We may compare the Latina's *hand* to an animal's claw with her *lacquered* and *manicured nails* ready to attack its prey: a man.

The Latina's head *hair* is similar to pubis hair, i.e. *thick, springy, intimate* and *wild*. *Wild* means that cannot be controlled. Furthermore, to emphasize this animalistic characteristic, the Latina is shown as shedding her hair in bed, as a snake sheds the skin.

This animalization of the figure of the Latino woman, characterized by an association with animals, construes her stereotypical figure in a sexualized manner.

The word *temptation* is used to refer to a Latina, thus, giving the image of a provocative woman, someone other people cannot escape from or elude. In the religious field, a temptation does not seduce, it means that a person may be the victim of a bad person. This woman captivates men and they cannot elude her. The fact that the Latina is a temptation does not mean she is respected as a person. On the

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contrary, she is associated with promiscuity, she has a reputation which is not good for women and which implies disapproval.

The Latina is depicted as someone who is bursting out with passion, who can barely contain her desire, a woman who lives her life more freely, without any taboo: This woman lives her sexual life in a *rampant* and *not complicated* way; she even has *specialties* which she carries out in bed, magnifying negative features of this woman. Moreover, she is shown as a person who is *on fire, hot, passionate* and *flammable*. The result is the stereotype of an ardent and erotic woman.

She uses her *mouth* depicted as big, outstanding, red, and attractive to men, probably to give men pleasure, not to talk.

The Latino woman is portrayed as having an insatiable and animalistic sexual life and thus living her sexual life freely and doing whatever is prohibited to other women. This sexual objectification accentuates her sexual readiness, embedding an ideological construe of these women.

Because she is *good-looking*, she is a cause of *attraction* for men. Her *carnelian lips* representing passion, her *lacquered* and *manicured nails* and her *pliant, pampered body*, show a woman who accentuates her femininity, her *red lips* and her sexualized *mouth* which is *large* and *flawless*, are all resources to attract and fascinate men.

Mata Hari is a name given to a Latina. If we take the historical character, we know that she was a seductive professional dancer, mistress and female spy. The word Latin adds another attribute to the well-known historical character in *Latin Mata Hari*. A Latina is also associated with the word *whore*, which we consider a synonym to *Latin Mata Hari* here, because both examples make reference to sex.

Latinas' sexuality is also shown through her attractive *beautiful mesmerizing form* and *curvaceous body*; keeping her *form or image in shape* and also through the attributes of her skin: *smooth, fluorescent, radiant, beveled, soft*. Words like *exorbitant, titanic, generous* characterize her size. These words show temporary characteristics that portray her body as attractive available objects for the pleasure of men. As Ponterotto (2014) suggests, the female body is trivialized as she is primarily recognized by her physical characteristics, therefore losing her own identity as a person.

Over-lexicalization

Over-lexicalization is the strategy to encode ideology in discourse through surfeit repetitious or quasi-synonymous terms (Fowler et al 1979 in Talbot et al 2003). Fairclough (1989: 115) opts for the term "over-wording" to refer to the relative density of the number of words used to name the concepts from a particular domain, which may be "a sign" or "intense preoccupation: pointing to 'peculiarities in the ideology' of the group responsible for it.

The following table shows repetition of lexical items. As can be observed, repetition is mainly used in connection to parts of the woman's body and her sexuality.

| Word repeated | Times repeated |
|---------------|----------------|
| breast | 17 |
| buttocks | 2 |
| muslos | 2 |
| thighs | 6 |
| legs | 7 |
| hips | 7 |
| goddess | 3 |
| hot | 3 |
| whore | 3 |
| amazona | 2 |

Table 3: number of words over-lexicalized

As Molina Guzmán and Valdivia (2004:211), conclude, “sexuality plays a central role in the tropicalization of Latinas” as regards “sexual availability, proficiency and desirability.” These authors also add that their genitals and buttocks have been highly sexualized by the American culture. This can be seen in the emphasis on their breasts, hips and buttocks when Latinas are characterized, portraying the ardent woman who provokes strong passions in Dominguez Miguela’s stereotype classification (2001).

The next table shows the use of (quasi)-synonyms which again refer to parts of the body or make reference to the Latinas sexual life. As can be observed, quasi-synonyms used are parts of the body or to make reference to the Latina’s sexual life.

| Quasi-synonym |
|---|
| bosom Breasts |
| buttocks nalgas - nalgotas – behind |
| muslos thighs – legs |
| mare amazona - jinetera – Mata Hari – whore |
| hot flammable – on fire |

Table 4: over lexicalization through quasi synonyms

Both repetition of the same items and (quasi)-synonyms help identify which domain is predominant. Items mainly focus the attention on the domain body, whereas both domains, body and sex, are equally emphasized with quasi-synonyms. However, it is important to mention that most the parts of the body repeated or mentioned with quasi-synonyms are connected to parts which arouse men’s sexual desire.

Over lexicalizations serves to concentrate the attention on domains mentioned as we show in the following table:

| Lexical items | Emphasis on | Meaning |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>bosom-breasts</i> • <i>buttocks - nalgas - nalgotas-behind</i> • <i>muslos - thighs - legs</i> | The Latina's body → | Objectification of the woman; a commodity → |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>mare - amazon - jinetera - MataHari - whore</i> | The Latina's attitude towards sex or her sexual life → | Sexual objectification of the woman; a desirable sexual commodity; an object for the pleasure of men → |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>hot - flammable-onfire</i> | The Latina's intensity in her sexual life → | Sexual arousal; damage → |

Table 5: interpretations of over-lexicalization

After the previous analysis, we can regroup the lexicalized and over lexicalized words as shown in the following diagram. In this new grouping of the samples, we observe an overall representation of the Latina stereotype.

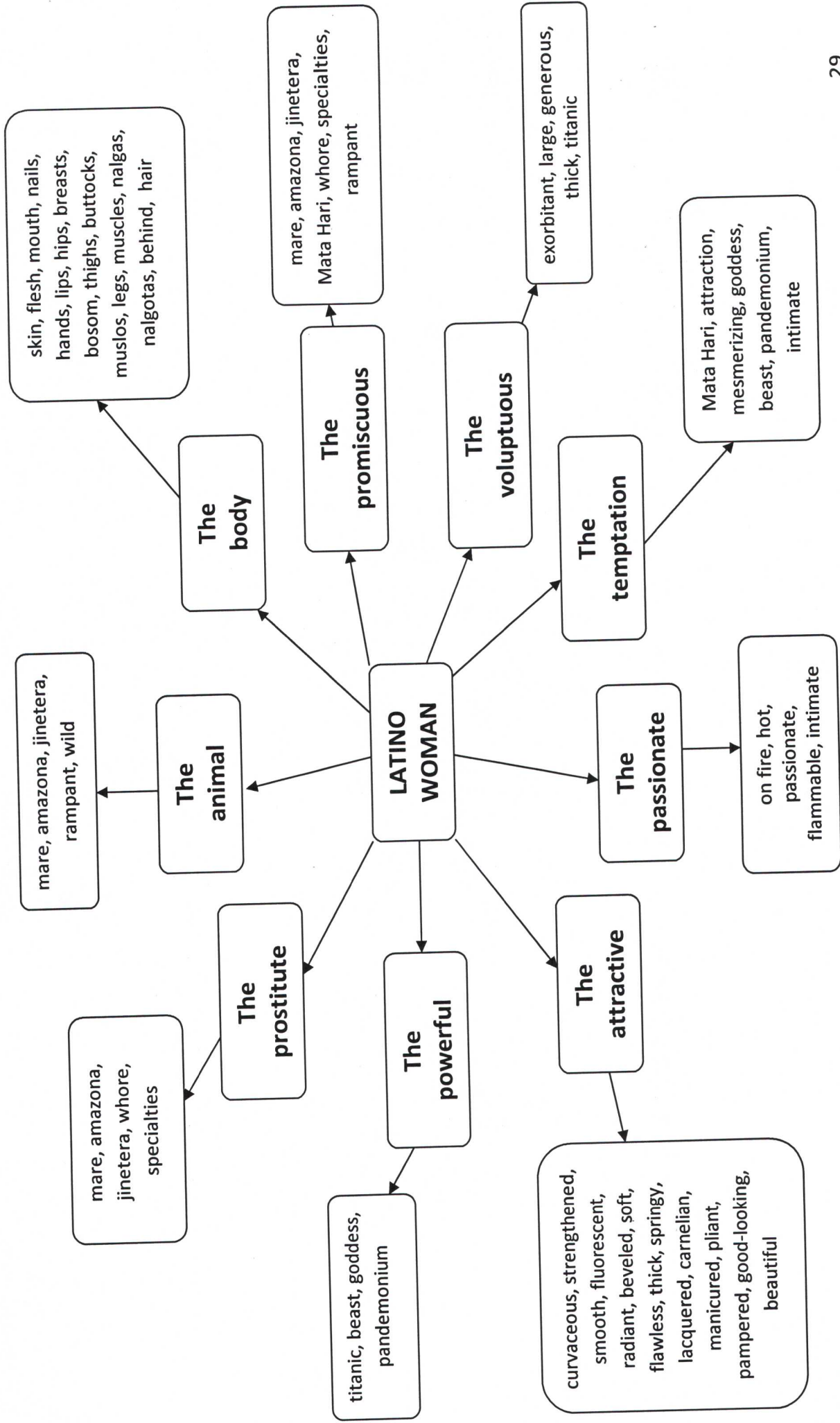


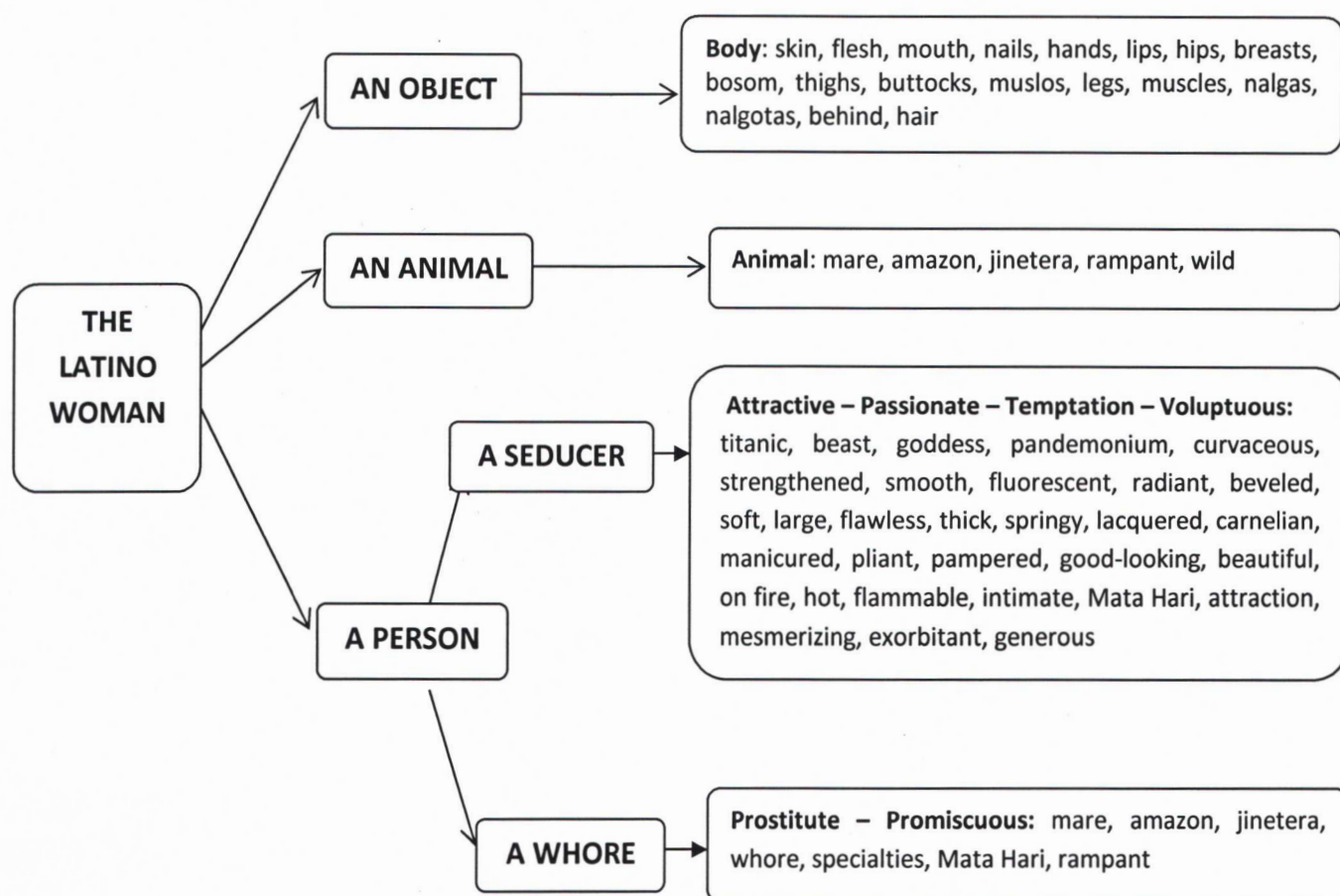
Diagram 1: overall representation of the Latinostereotype

Female stereotypes in the novel *The Agüero Sisters* by Cristina García”

Mariana Martinez

As can be seen in the diagram, the Latino woman is named with words that range from whore to goddess. Her body consists of parts which are exuberant or sensual and causes chaos when she appears. What she has to offer is mainly in connection to sex and corporeal image.

We can sum up the findings into saying that the Latino woman is reduced to an object, to an animal, to person (a seducer and a whore).



In addition, the representation of the woman as an animal and as a person (seducer and whore) adds to the stereotype of the Latino woman as powerful. María Inés García Canal (in Szurmuk and McKee et al, 2009) suggests that power means strength and relations. It cannot be considered as just repression because it does not only prohibit, it also stimulates, seduces, induces, facilitates. Power implies relations of strength in tension and imbalance. One exercises power and the other looks for ways

of resisting. The Latina is powerful in relation to sex: men cannot avoid her, she achieves what she wants or needs in this respect.

9. RESULTS

As regards lexical choice and categories, we observe that nouns represent a Latino woman as a fragmented person or prostitute and that adjectives accentuate temporary characteristics of this Latino woman mostly in connection to her body and sexuality, the two domains identified according to similar semantic features.

The corpus suggests the stereotype of a woman from a masculine point of view. It reveals a woman whose most important attribute is her body, a site on which power is exercised. Her body is fragmented and she is blurred as a human being but she is able to become a person again when she is related to sex. In this situation she is represented also as a strong powerful woman.

The corpus also suggests the animalization of the portrayal of the Latino woman, which emphasizes her animalistic characteristics, focusing on her sexualized manner, therefore implying the animalization of human sexual intercourse. In other words, the Latino woman sexuality is shown as a purely animal activity.

Latinas are depicted as promiscuous. Promiscuity is not socially or culturally acceptable. She is construed as an empty woman; she only has parts of body for men's satisfaction. Hence, this gives a negative connotation of this woman.

We have the image of a Latina as a fragmented mythological being. She is a powerful being for her corporeal presence but with no place for her intellect. This means she is only considered as a body for consumption by men.

The woman is then negatively stereotyped. She is an object of sexual desire and we cannot even view her as a person. Her body is presented as body parts in isolation, not in the context of a whole person. There is not only a reduction to her body but also to her appearance which deprives of any possibility of having a voice. This results into a

trivialization and denigration of the representation of a Latino woman through a masculine view.

10.CONCLUSION

This study has tried to find an answer to what the female stereotypes are represented in the novel in *The Agüero Sisters*, which attributes and behaviours define these stereotypes, and what portrayal of women they socialize through literature.

Stereotyping is a representation that reduces persons to a set of exaggerated, commonly negative, character traits. For our analysis we considered if the stereotypes show a positive or negative evaluation of Latino women, what female characteristics are emphasized by (over)lexicalization and if women characters define a Cuban-American female stereotype.

In coincidence with the provocative ardent woman of the classification of Latino women proposed by Dominguez Miguela (2001), findings suggest that at least one of the four women characters in the novel falls into stereotypical portrayals of Latino women, specifically highlighting the promiscuous hypersexualized attractive Latina woman.

The exaggerated traits of a Latino woman present in the novel were the following:

- A woman who is not a complete human being as regards her body. She is just a collection of a physically perfect body parts. This woman does not have a head, voice, arms, ears. She only has parts of the body which are connected to sexuality.
- She is admired as a sexual object as sexuality is emphasized through lexicalization. She is represented as a magical being through the reference to mythological creatures. This implies a powerful woman.
- She is a promiscuous woman who lives her sexual life freely.
- She has no moral values because of her embarrassing behavior.

This study reflects how ideology is construed through language, fact which does not necessarily imply a representational concept of truth giving as a result the

sexualisation of the human condition of the Latino woman. Ideology connects with power relations in the society we live in; in other words, ideology involves those modes of feeling, valuing, believing which reflects the social power relation, in this case, the apparent power of men over the (Latino) woman through the view he has of her as a person who lives outside the boundaries of behavior of the foreign cultural territory she is immersed in. In spite of this masculine view, she is a powerful woman who can dominate men.

This research could be a starting point for further analysis of other roles of Latino women in relation to work, family and religion/santería or also in relation to stereotypes construed in literature produced by authors of Latino origin.

11. CORPUS

1. amazona
2. attraction
3. beast
4. beautiful
5. behind
6. beveled
7. bosom
8. breasts
9. buttocks
10. carnelian
11. curvaceous
12. exorbitant
13. flammable
14. flawless
15. flesh
16. fluorescent
17. form
18. generous
19. goddess
20. good looking
21. hair
22. hands
23. hips
24. hot
25. image
26. in shape
27. intimate
28. jinetera
29. lacquered
30. large
31. legs
32. lips
33. manicured
34. mare
35. Mata Hari
36. mesmerizing
37. mouth
38. muscles
39. muslos
40. nails
41. nalgas
42. nalgotas
43. not complicated
44. on fire
45. pampered
46. pandemonium
47. passionate
48. radiant
49. rampant
50. skin
51. smooth
52. soft
53. specialties
54. springy
55. strengthened
56. specialties
57. temptation
58. thick
59. thighs
60. titanic
61. whore
62. wild

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